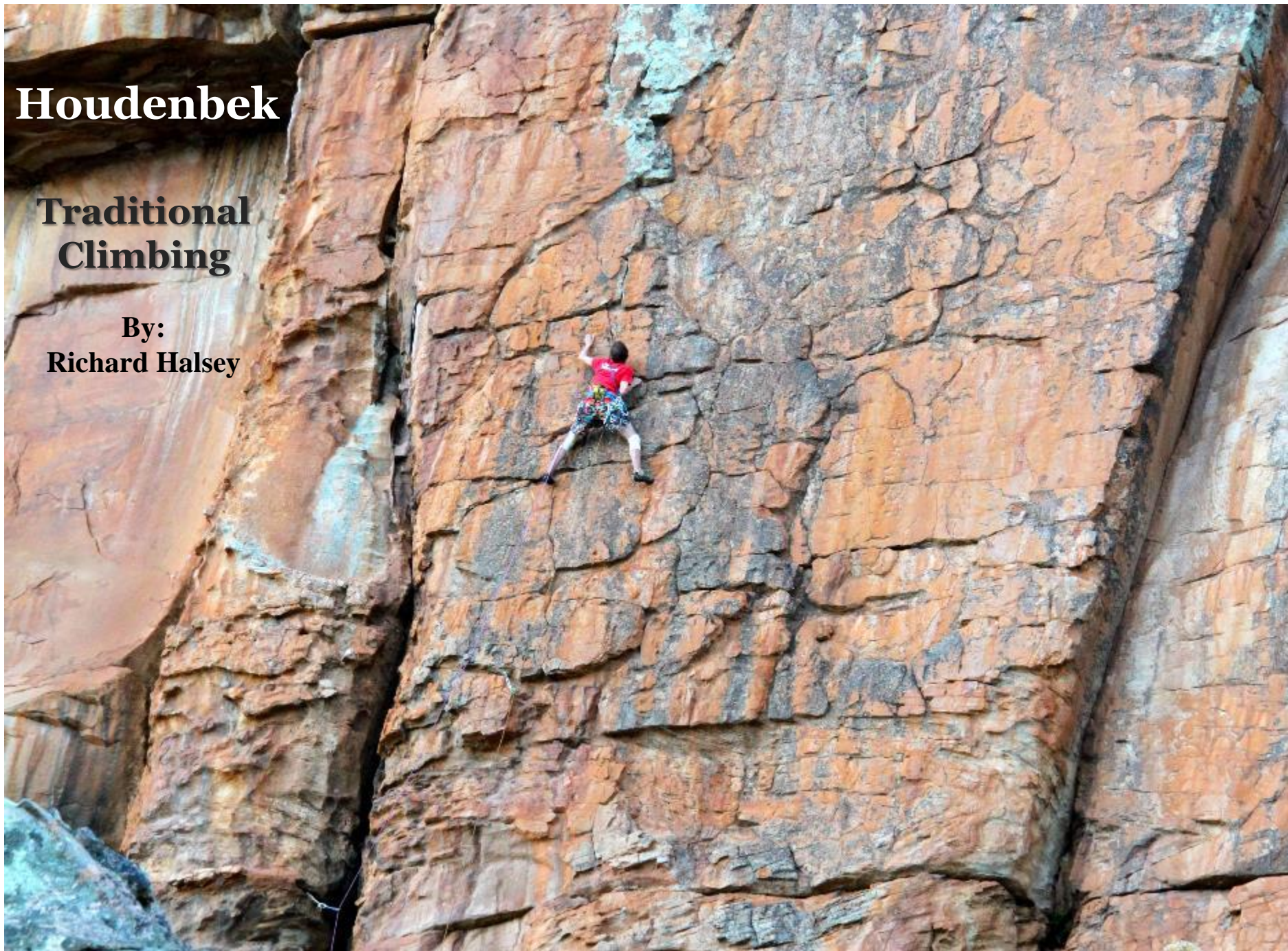


Houdenbek

Traditional Climbing

**By:
Richard Halsey**





A complete guide to the traditional climbing routes at Houdenbek

Houdenbek is located 60km north of Ceres, and about 200km from Cape Town. With tar road access, lovely accommodation, and a variety of outdoors activities in addition to rock climbing, it makes for a convenient and satisfying weekend getaway.

Cover: Richard Halsey opening *Axes of Weevil* (17) at the Choice Crag. Photo: Tony Lourens.

Left: Uwe Pitsch on the first ascent of *Nut Heads* (18) at the Blue Chip area. Photo: Richard Halsey

Update: **29 May 2017.**
This is a work in progress..

69 routes and counting

1. For accommodation on the farm, please contact Johalet van der Merve. All the details are on their website:
<http://www.houdenbek.co.za/>
2. Charl and Johalet have welcomed climbing on their farm and been incredibly hospitable. Access is a privilege, so **please do not do anything to jeopardise this.**
3. Bring extra tat/biners to add to abseils, as the existing tat will get hammered by the sun quickly. Use any existing abseils at your discretion.
4. Choose new abseils carefully, not all the horns/mushrooms at the top of the crags are solid.
5. **Climb with a helmet! The rock consistency/quality varies enormously at Houdenbek. While routes have mostly been established on the best rock, there are some fragile flakes/brittle holds around, often in the first few meters.**
6. **Although there are a number of easy routes, some require a fairly confident climbing style and gear placements are not always obvious. It may take a few routes to get familiar with the rock.**
7. In summer you will want to climb in the shade and swim in the dam several times. It gets bloody hot, you have been warned!
8. This is a really beautiful place. Make sure you take all your litter (including toilet paper!) out with you.
9. This guide is a work in progress. The crag pictures are the best there is for now.
10. There is plenty of potential for new routes, but you will need to do some exploring. If you open new routes, please email me and I will add it to the guide. rjhalsey@gmail.com
11. If you have interest in bolting, please chat to Charl, but please respect existing trad lines.
12. Have fun!

The Trad at Houdenbek

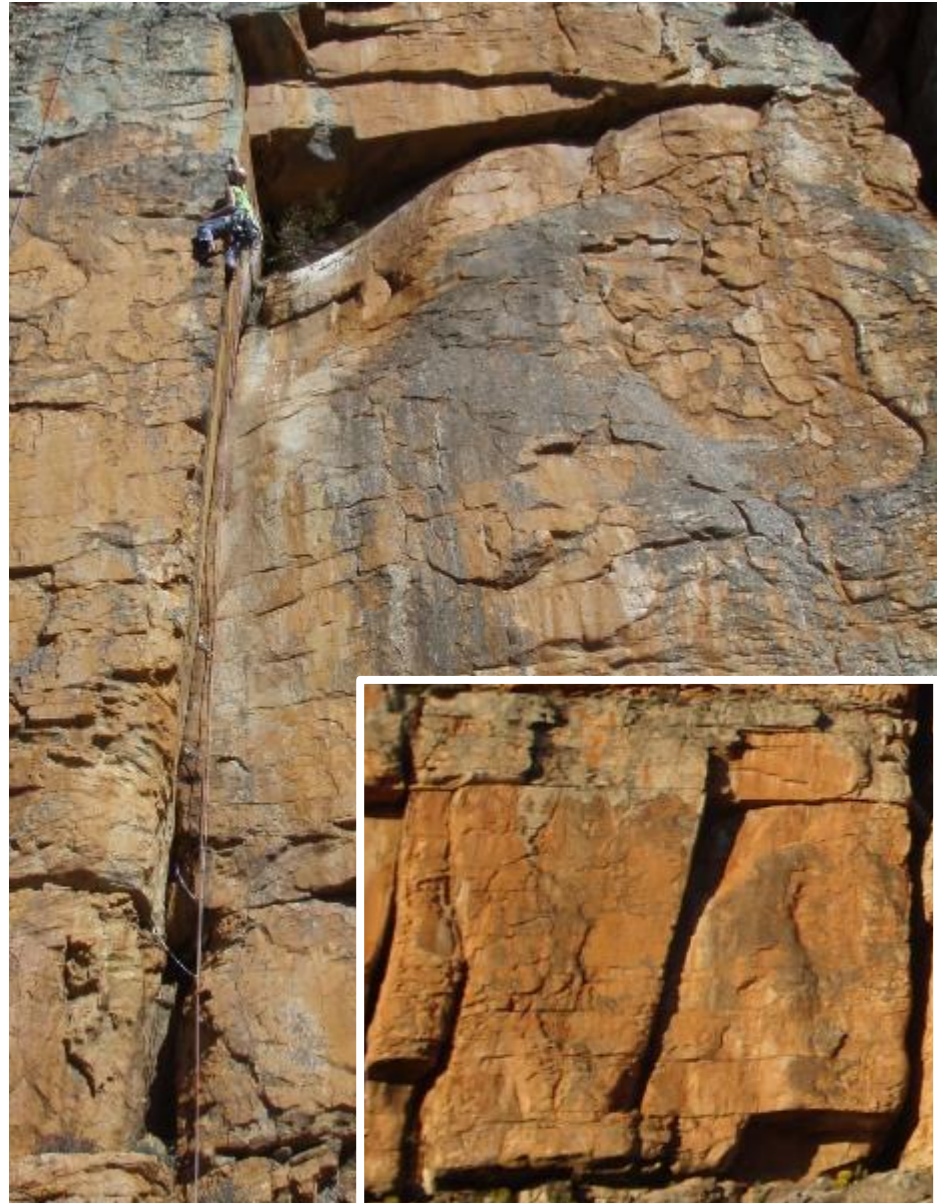
I first heard about Houdenbek after Russell Warren started developing the sport crag by the dam in 2010. He also kindly let myself and others open some of the routes he had bolted. On my first visit in 2011 we walked up to the Heiveld Arch and I saw lots of good stuff to climb. In particular was an excellent looking brown wall with a striking arête running up the middle.

Over the last few years, I have returned several times with a number of people and had a really great time finding good single pitch trad lines in a stunning setting. I hope that others who visit the farm enjoy it as much as I have. There is plenty left to climb, so while many of the routes in this guide are really good, it can also be used to see where the gaps are to add something of your own.

Richard's Lucky Seven*

Rhombus romp (15)
The Joy Axis (17)
Flying Saucer (18)
Read the Lightning (19)
Party People (21)
Bokkeveld Boogie (22)
Ripple Effect (24)

*definitely subjective, probably biased,
but certainly not kak.



Pythagoras Dilemma: the route that started it all. Photo: Douw Steyn.

The Arch Crag

The crags below are all located along the path to the Heiveld arch:

Shade from mid-afternoon:

Boardroom

From the dam, walk about 20 mins along the arch path. Just before a large boulder with a cubic room inside, turn left to the crag.

Morester Square to Stolen Salami

Continue on the arch path past the Boardroom. Just before crossing a river you will see a long band of cliffs to the left. Take a path that initially turns sharp left here and follow it until near the appropriate sector.

Choice Crag

From the Morester Square turn off, cross the river and continue on the arch trail for another 15 mins, until opposite the right section of the crag. At this height, head back toward the base of the middle section (40 mins from the dam)

Shade in the morning:

Spider's Den

From the Choice Crag turn off, continue on the arch trail for 10 mins until the obvious Spider Wall comes into view (50 mins from the dam). The Arachnis Pillar is about 5 mins right and slightly down from the Spider wall.

The Mecca Crag

Blue Chip

From the dam, looking in the direction of Mecca, this is the highest grey crag, which resembles a ship. Walk along the western edge of the dam until able to cross over the main inflow river. Continue around the dam, and up the shallow valley heading NE. Follow the watercourse to a beautiful plateau. Continue for a few minutes, then head left up the slope (with the crag on your left) until almost level with the crag, then make your way up through the rocks to the base. (One can also approach from the sport crag, but you will fight through a few sections of bush)

Notes:

Use the overviews to find the sections of the crags.

On the individual topos, the routes are drawn in accurately, so RDs are not written up unless they are not on the photo or extra info is useful .

Stars:

These are subjective and relative to Houdenbek. A 5 star route here will not be as good as at Tafelberg. It is to give an idea which are the better routes on the farm.

Crag Map



© 2014 AfriGIS (Pty) Ltd.
Image © 2014 CNES / Astrium

Imagery Date: 10/1/2013 32°56'53.21" S 19°25'01.85" E elev 1199 m eye alt 4.70 km

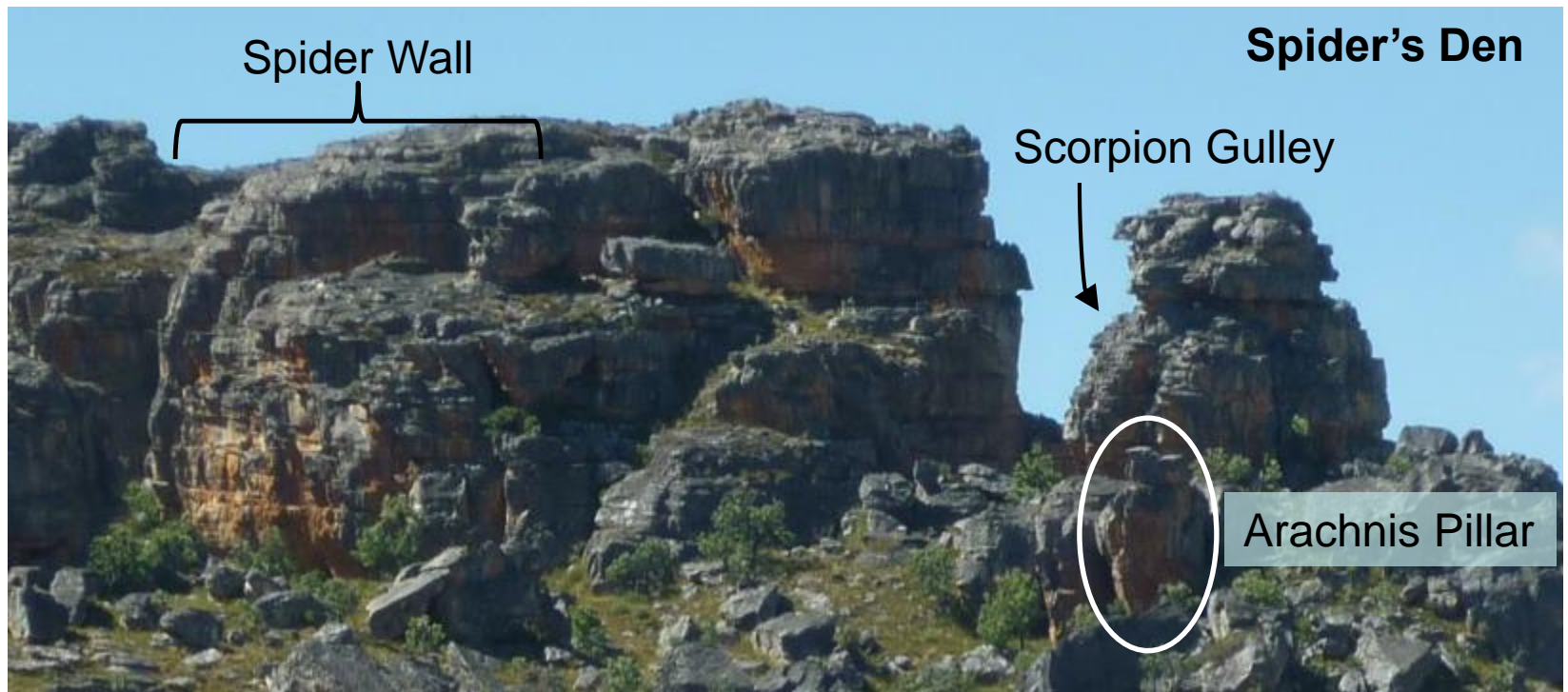


Choice Crag

Left

Middle

Right



Boardroom - Left

Here be Dragons (17) *** S. Jack & R. Halsey 18/9/11

About 15m left of *Ripple Effect* is a large rectangular recess with a free standing pillar in it. Climb the arête to the right of this straight to the top. Sparse gear.

Ripple Effect (24) ***** R. Halsey & S. Jack 18/9/11

Surf the mini red waves between a hard start and devious, airy finish. Gear is spaced out in the middle.

Feeling Groovy (17) *** S. Jack & R. Halsey 18/9/11

Boonanza (17) **** S. Jack & R. Halsey 18/9/11

About 10m right of *Feeling Groovy* is a face with a prominent, jagged series of laybacks. Climb these to the top.



Notes:

Late afternoon shade.

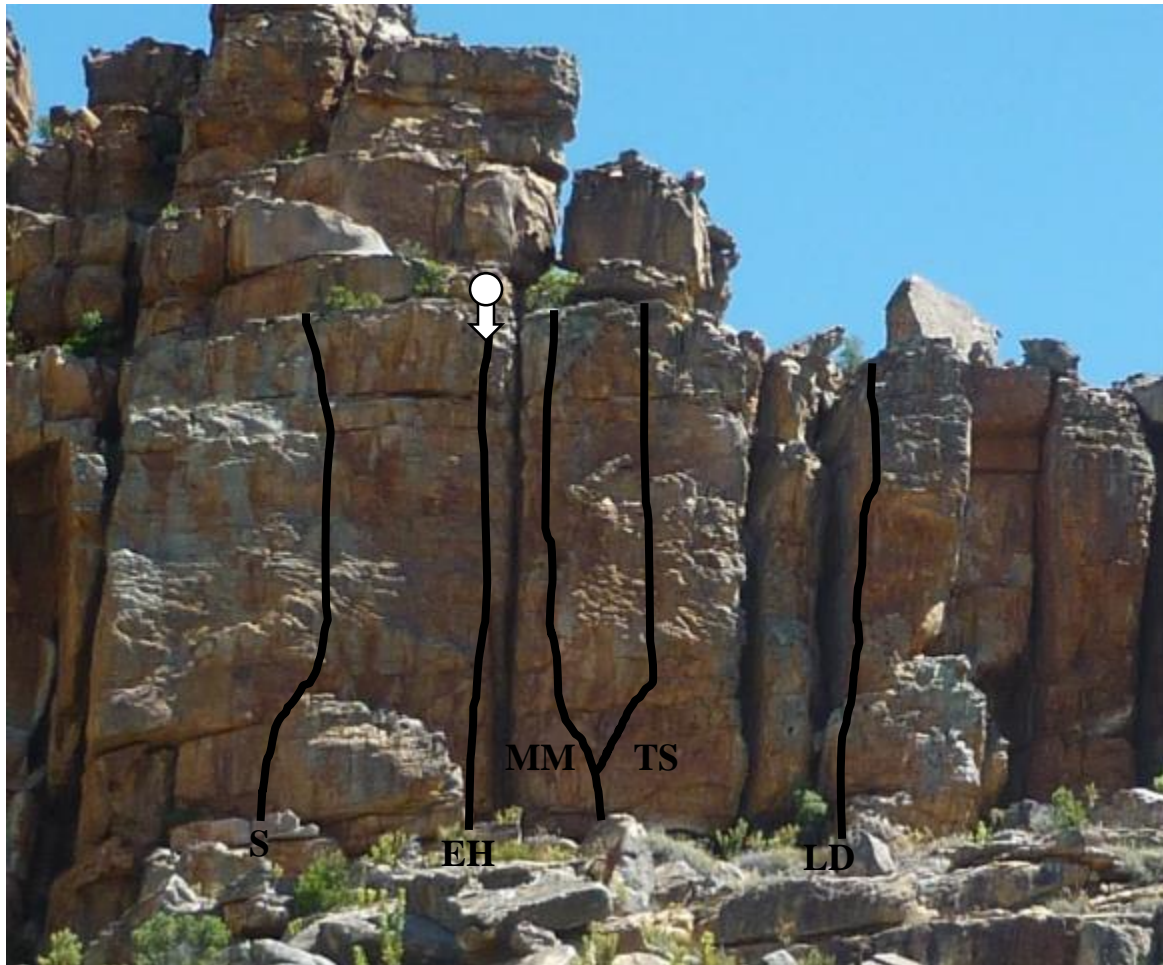
Descent: Walk left to an abseil above *Here be Dragons*.





Above: On the farm you will find great walks in beautiful surrounds, there are also boulders, for those who like to stay closer to the ground.

Left: Richard Halsey on the first airy exit of *Ripple Effect*. Highly recommended if you can climb the grade. Photo: Melinda Griffiths.



Boardroom - Middle

Strolling (13) *** R. Halsey 31/12/13

Eleventh Hour (15) *** R. Halsey 31/12/13

Midnight Moment (16) ***

R. Halsey 31/12/13

Tortoise Shell (18) ***** R. Halsey 31/12/13

Last Dance (16R) ** R. Halsey 31/12/13

Notes:

Late afternoon shade.

Tortoise Shell is the best of the routes in this section of The Boardroom

Last Dance is fairly run out.

Descent: Abseil above *Eleventh Hour*.



Boardroom - Right

Jenny and Dawie (13) *** M. Griffiths 18/9/11

The Graffiti Lives On (14) *** R. van Breda 18/9/11

Bivvy Bliss (15) *** R. Halsey 18/9/11

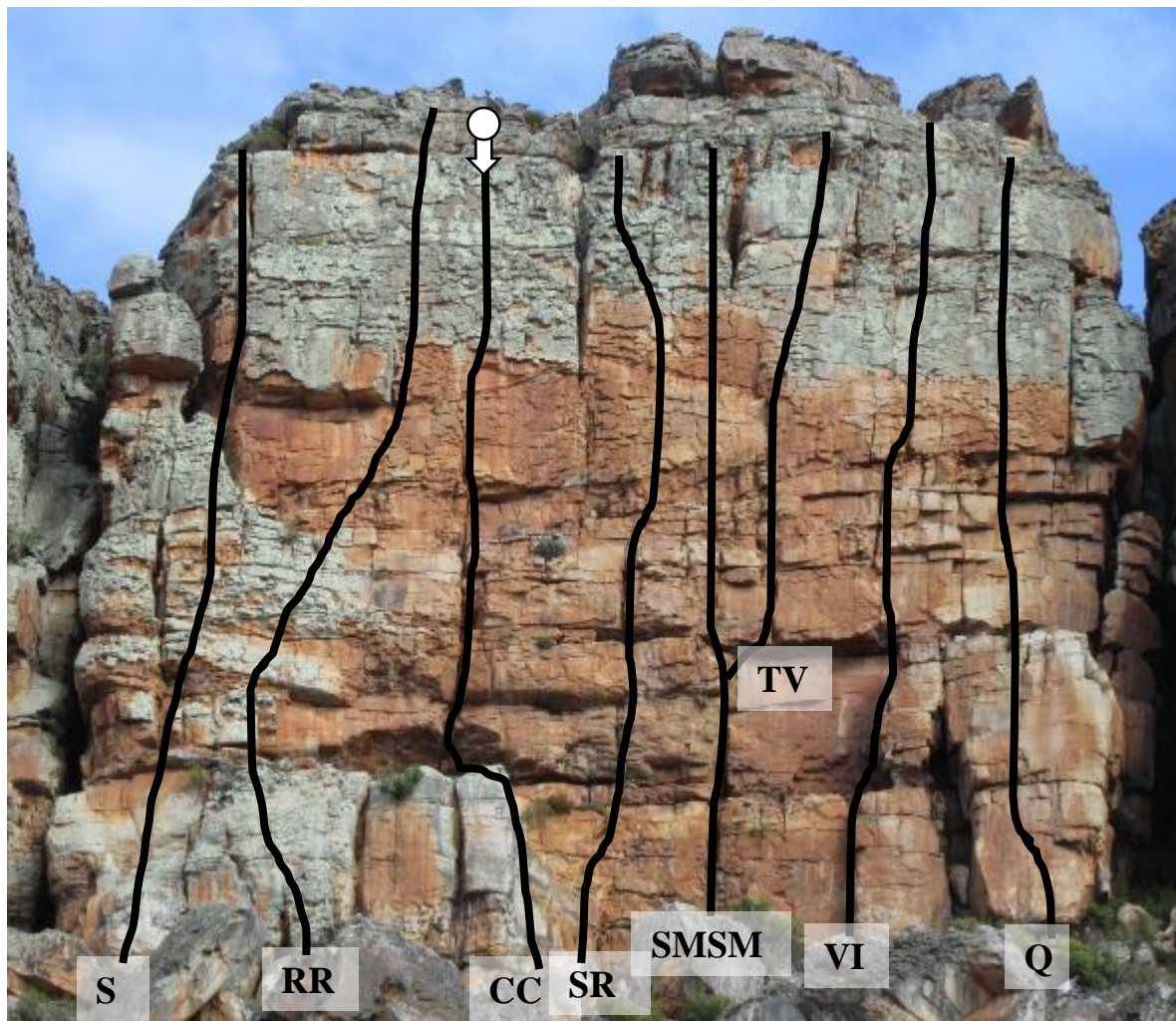
Bivvy Plus (15) ** R. Halsey 31/12/13

Notes:

Mid to late afternoon shade.

Bivvy Plus starts from the boulder leaning against the wall. Short, but superb position right on the arête.

Descent: Walk left across the top of the crag to the abseil above *Eleventh Hour*, or scramble down the corner left of *Bivvy Bliss*.



Morester Square - Middle

Spongebob (15) **** R. Halsey 12/07/14

Rhombus Romp (15) ***** R. Halsey 12/07/14

The Cutting Cube (19) *** R. Halsey 13/07/14

The Square Root (18) ****

R. Halsey & R. van Breda 13/07/14

She's Mad but she's Magic (16) ***

J. Gutierrez & E. van der Merwe 21/11/14

Trapesium Void (18) ***

R. Halsey & K. Cuesta 21/11/14

Via Ines (17) *** K. Cuesta & R. Halsey 21/11/14

Quadralicious (21) ***

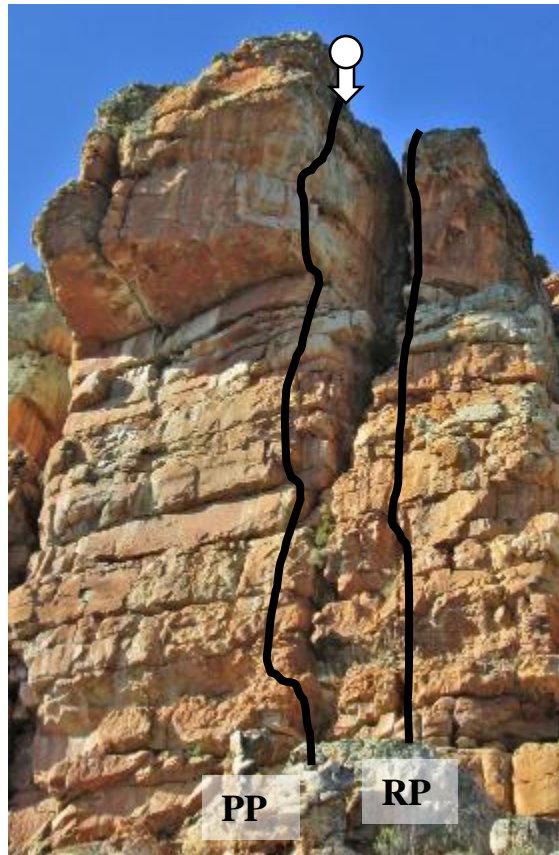
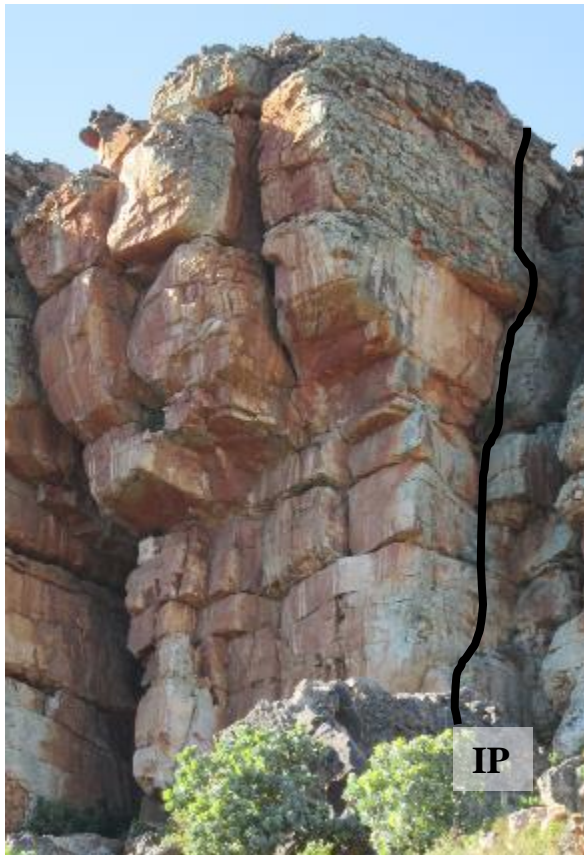
R. Halsey & K. Cuesta 21/11/14

Notes:

Late afternoon shade.

Abseil (45m) from above *The Cutting Cube*.

The Cutting Cube: #4 Camalot useful. Can split in two pitches at the first ledge about 8m up.



Morester Square - Left

Irrational Pi (15) *** M. Thilo & R. Halsey 28/05/17

P1(15) to the ledge with the tree. P2 (15) up crack and left onto face at top. Pitches can be combined.

Morester Square - Right

Party People (21) ***** R. Halsey, C. Standing & M. Thilo 27/05/17

One of the best at Houdenberg! Easier than it looks, with great rock and exposed finish on the steep headwall.

Redemption Pikey (23/24) *** R. Halsey & M. Bosman 27/05/17

P1: (18) to the ledge. P2: Takes the steep arête. Great feature, but marginal gear in places and a #4 Camalot recommended. Can walk off right after P1.

Stolen Salami - Left



Late afternoon shade. *Coffin Dodger* has morning shade.
Descent: Scramble down to the right (facing the crag).

Boa Lime (20) *** J. Wakeling 31/7/11

Follows the crack line to the top of the buttress.

Big Green Coconuts (23) *** R. Halsey 31/7/11

Pro is marginal in the middle section of the route, so bring your coconuts along.

Coffin Dodger (24/25) ***** R. Halsey & A. Van Der Heever 24/4/16

Gain the steep thin crack. Move left before it terminates and up into the Coffin.
Escape with effort and follow the wide crack to the top.



Contemplating the next sequence on *Big Green Coconuts* (23).
Photo: Douw Steyn.

Stolen Salami - Middle

Vlieënde Bobbejaantjie (17) *** R. Halsey 25/4/16

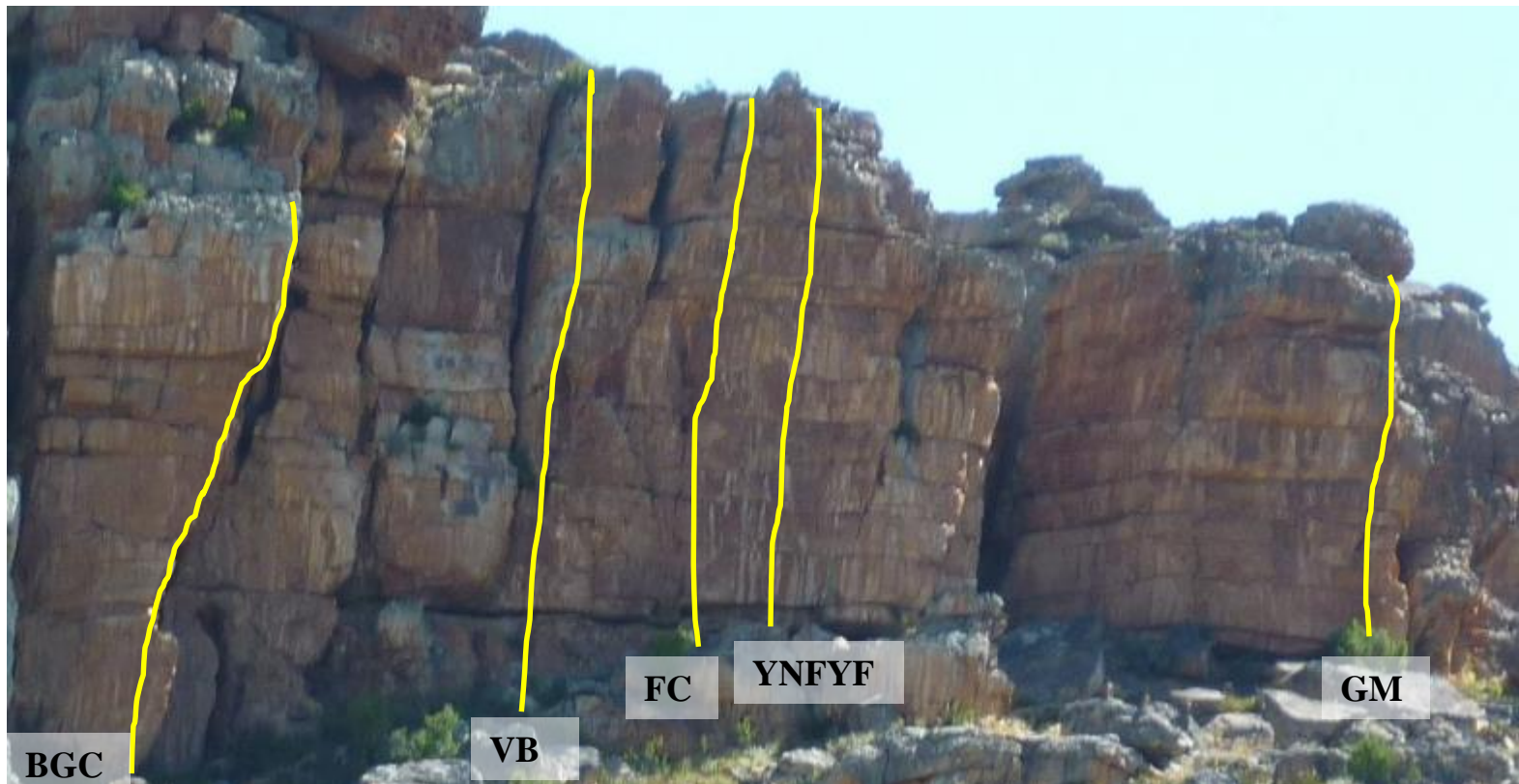
Pull up to below an arête, and climb to the right up through a groove to top.

Full Circle (17) **** R. Halsey & M. Bosman 25/4/16

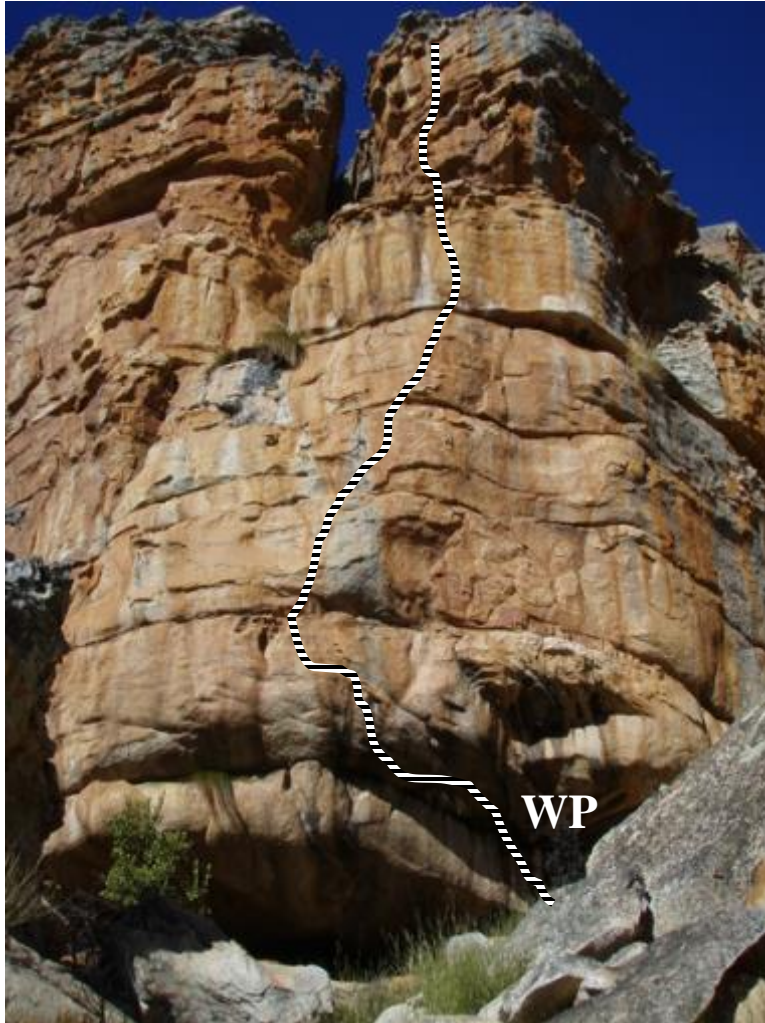
Start 2m left of the block below YNFYF. Pull up to establish on face and climb the red rock just right of a recess.

If You're not Fast You're Food (19) *** D. Steyn 31/7/11

Takes a central line up the brown face to the left of *Wasabi Peanut*. Starting on a square block, pull up on two crimps to a rail, then direct to the top.



Stolen Salami - Middle



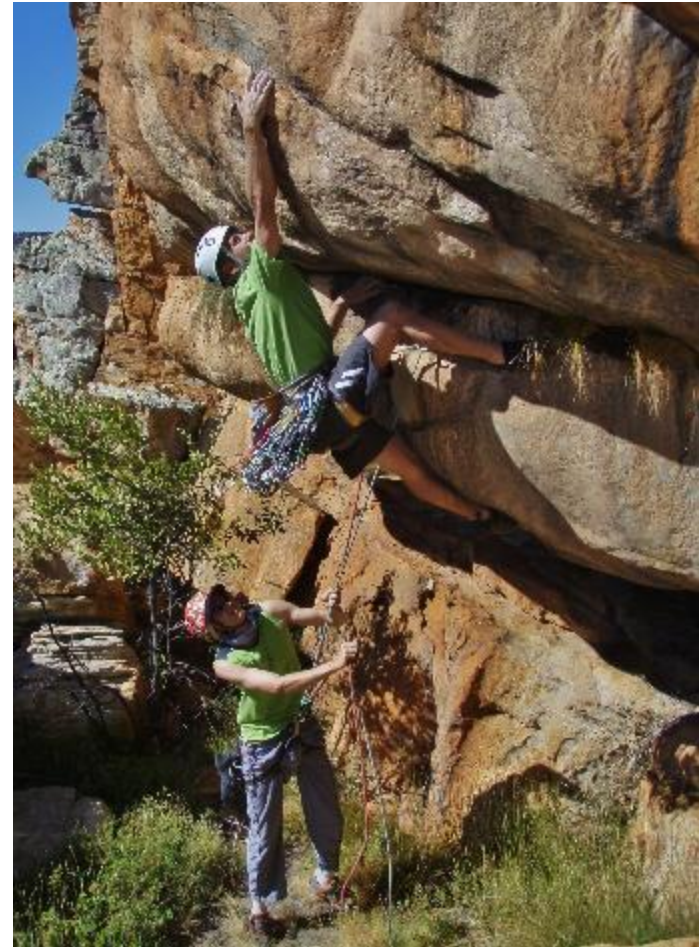
Notes:

Late afternoon shade

Descent: Walk over the back and head to the right
(facing the crag).

Wasabi Peanut (24) *** D. Steyn 31/7//11

Lean across from boulder to reach the finger rail, then crank through the bulge and onto the face. Take a central line to the top.

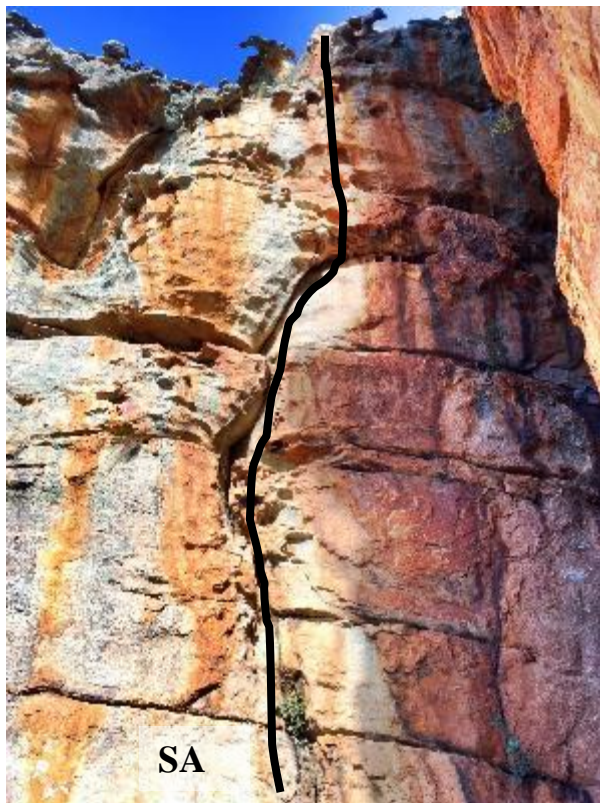


Above: Douw Steyn going for it on *Wasabi Peanut* (24). Photo: Julia Wakeling.

Stolen Salami - Right

Scents of Adventure (17) *** R. Halsey & M. Bosman 25/4/16

Follow the curving crack, passing the small plant and root low down in the crack.



Notes:

Descent: Walk over the back and between the buttresses.

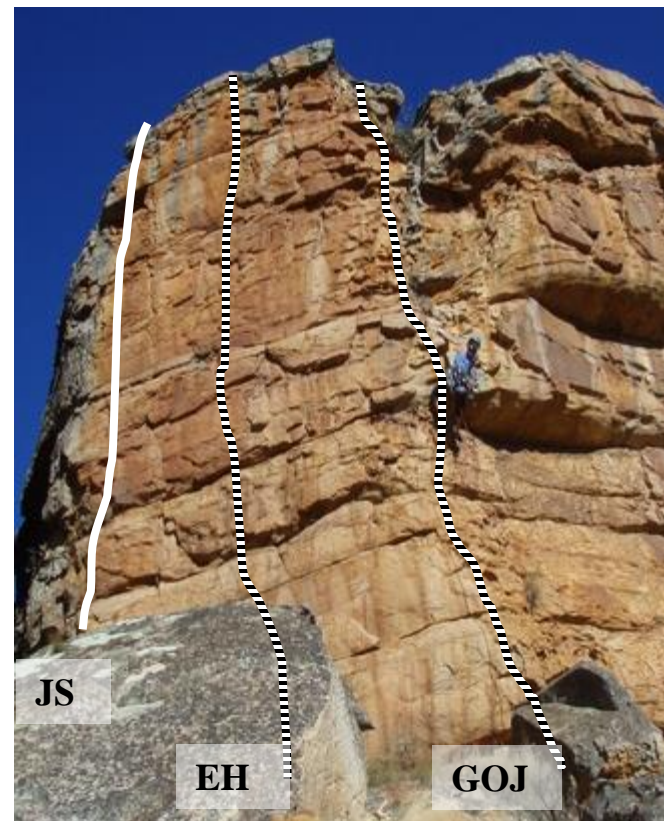
A Jade Scent (15) *** R. Halsey & M. Bosman 25/4/16

Emerald Harrier (17) *** R. Halsey 31/7/11

Grab my Olive Jugs (15) *** J. Wakeling 31/7/11

Green Monday (16) *** R. Halsey & M. Bosman 24/4/16

Starting by a small tree, climb the right side of the face to the right of GOJ, passing the roofs on the right.



Choice Crag – Left

Rooi Rok Bokkie (17) *** S. Jack & R. Halsey 17/9/11



Notes:

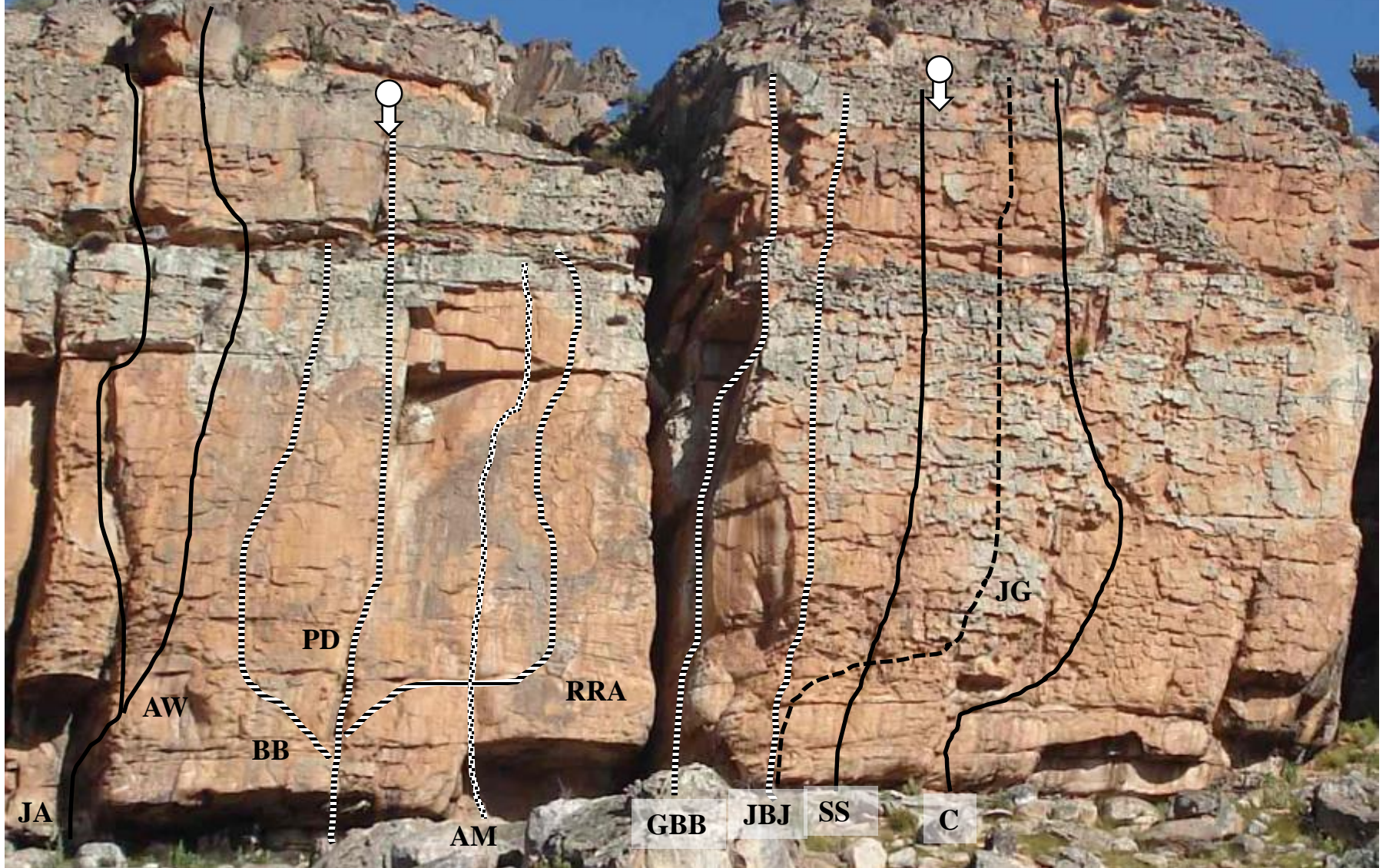
Late afternoon shade.

Descent: Scramble down to the right (facing the crag).



Marian Penso taking in the vista after we had a total blast on the FA of *The Joy Axis*.

Choice Crag - Middle



Choice Crag - Middle

Apart from the first 2-3m meters on the routes left of *Angular Momentum*, the rock quality is excellent.

The flat rock slabs below the juggy wall make for a great lunch spot.

The Joy Axis (17) **** R. Halsey & M. Penso 31/08/14

Axes of Weevil (17) **** R. Halsey & M. Thilo 25/10/14

The following three routes share the same starting crux, which can be aided if you have trouble getting off the ground.

Bokkeveld Boogie (22) or (19A1) **** D. Steyn 30/7/11

Pythagoras Dilemma (22) or (20A1) *** R. Halsey 30/7/11

After the start, follow the corner until about halfway up, where you swing left and follow the superb arête.

The Radical Right Angle (22) or (18A1) *** J. Wakeling 30/7/11

Angular Momentum (24) **** R. Halsey 17/9/11

Thin , committing face climbing with the proverbial sting in the tail. Would be a bold onsight.

Green Bladder Blues (18) **** S. Jack & R. Halsey 17/9/11

My Jugs are Bigger than your Jugs (14) *** J. Wakeling 30/7/11

Jugular Gym (14) *** R. Halsey & M. Thilo 26/10/14

Spring Start (20) *** M. Gowans & J. Gutierrez 30/8/14

Choicetta (22) ** R. Halsey 22/11/14

Hard start, followed by much easier, pleasant climbing.

Notes:

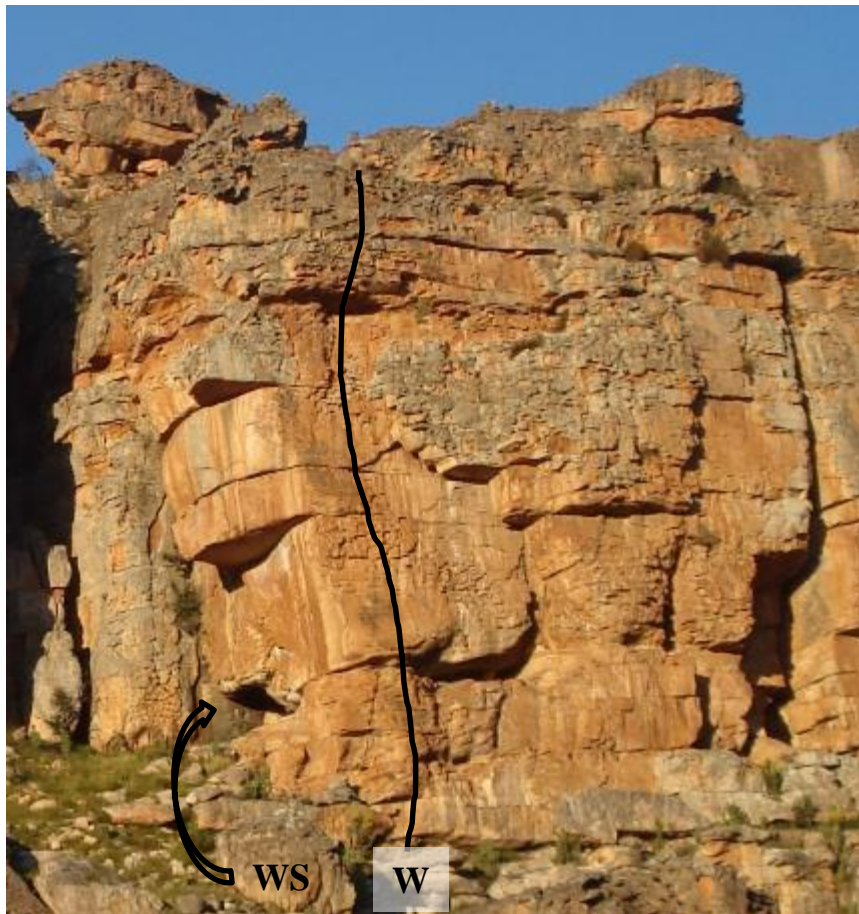
Late afternoon shade

Pythagoras Dilemma and *Angular Momentum* are both great routes, but have some tricky gear placements.

Decent: There are abseil points (both almost 30m) directly above *Pythagoras Dilemma* and *Spring Start*.



Left: Douw Steyn having a party while opening *Bokkeveld Boogie*, on brilliant rock at the Choice Crag.
Right: Julia Wakeling about to change direction on *The Radical Right Angle*.



The Wild Side (23/24) ** R. Halsey & R. Kellerman 21/11/15**

A journey. Start up the left wall, and step right onto the central wall with a vertical crack in centre. Move right into the curved fist crack and fight up to the face above. Continue to the roof, then rail right and up easily to the top. Difficulty will depend on hand size.

The Wildling (19) ** R. Halsey 21/11/15**



Above: Richard Halsey on the FA of *The Wild Side*.
Photo: Willem Boshoff.

Choice Crag - Right



Choice Crag - Right

The following two routes are most satisfying, but a tad spicy: good gear is sparse and somewhat cunning on the first quarter of the routes.

So Much of Fun (18) *** R. Halsey & M. Penso 30/08/14

So Much of Happiness (20) *** R. Halsey & M. Penso 30/08/14

Tricky Ricky (23) *** R. Halsey & M. Penso 31/08/14

Just right of the gully, head easily up into a small corner. Rail left at first rail to short arête, and up this to a finger rail. Tricky moves tend steeply up and right onto the face. Head left over a small roof and follow the side of face just right of gully.

Little M (15) *** M. Penso & R. Halsey 30/08/14

A straight line up the right side of a long narrow corner a few meters right of *Tricky Ricky*. Continue up the left facing flake about half way up the face. Shares the last 3m of *Tricky Ricky*.

Tekkie Tube (13) ** R. Halsey 30/12/13

A straight line up the face 2m right of *Little M*. There is a tube type feature about half way up and a short corner at the very top

Experimental Justice (12) ** R. Halsey & B. Excell 30/12/13.

A straight line up the face 3m right of *Tekkie Tube*

Ahmotillo (13) *** M. Thilo & R. Halsey 30/12/13.

Climb past a small tree then step left onto face and follow the vague arête to the top.

Read the Lightning (19) **** R. Halsey 30/12/13.

Great line. Follow the right tending crack until the rail about 2 below the roof. Traverse left until just past the left end of the roof. Cruise up the corner/face to complete the lightning bolt.

Notes:

Late afternoon shade

Descent: There is an abseil point (25m) above *So Much of Happiness*.

Spider's Den - left



Spider wall

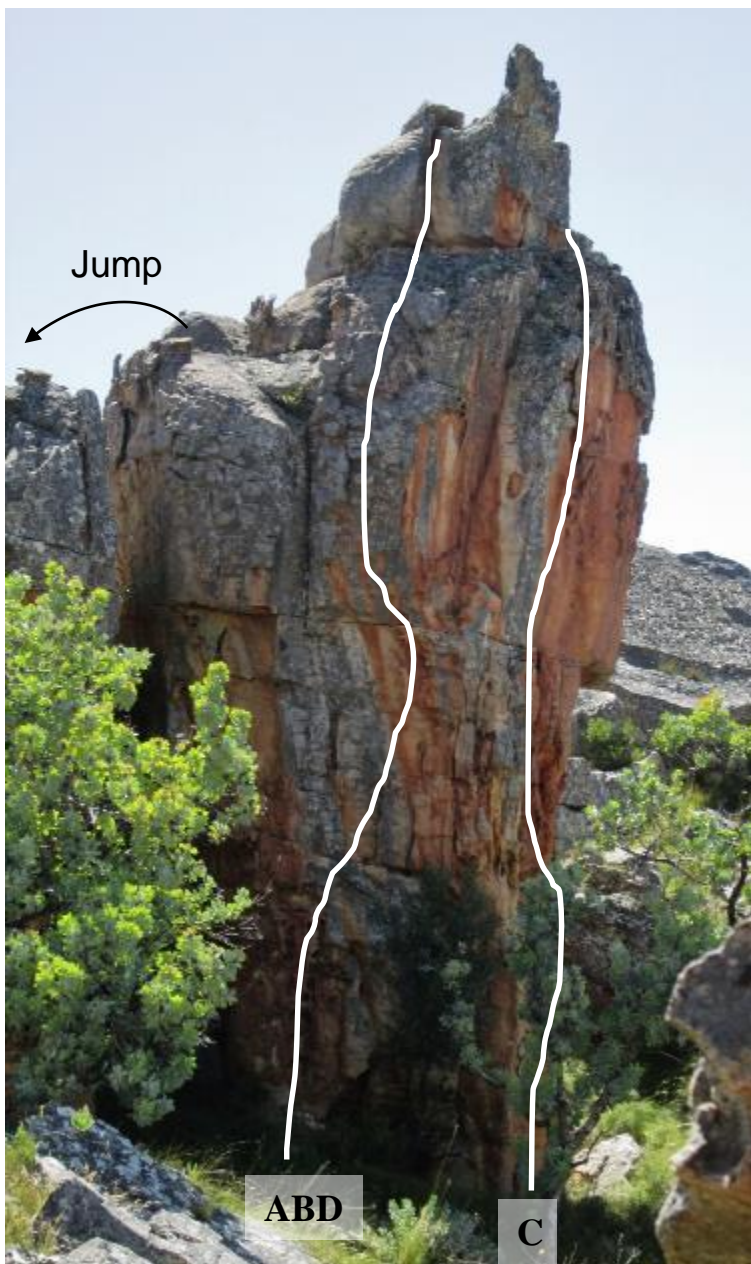
Sandwich Spider (20) *** R. Halsey & M. Thilo 26/10/14

Steep line taking the left side of the wall, and just right of the ledge systems. Gear is tricky and possibly run out.

Notes:

Shade until mid-afternoon

Scramble down to a abseil point (<25m) directly above the start of *Sandwich Spider*.



Spider's Den - right

Arachnis Pillar

Arboreal Break Dance (20) ***

R. Halsey & M. Thilo 26/10/14

Short pumpy number. Don't fall into the tree.

Crabango (20) *** R. Halsey 23/11/14

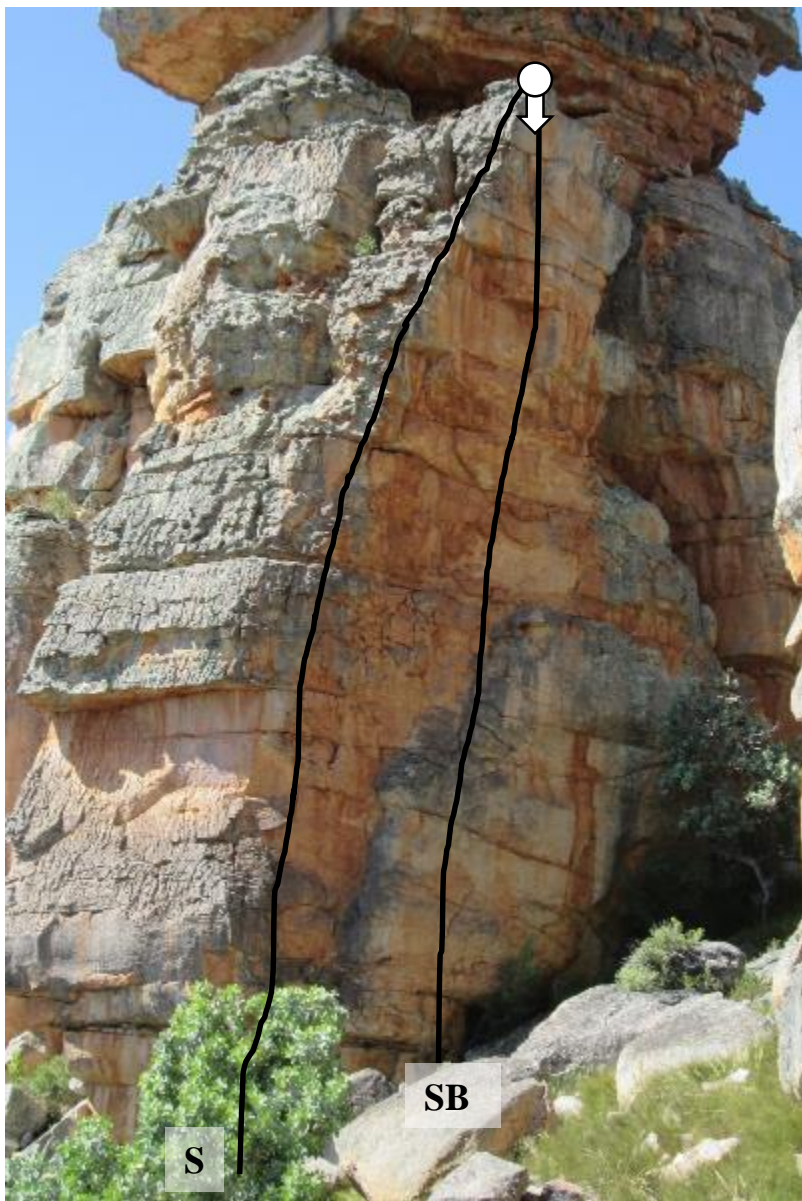
Start up the large pod by the tree, then move right to orange rock. Up steeply to top. Tricky gear in pockets low down.

Notes:

Shade till mid-afternoon

Jump across to gap and walk down to the base.





Scorpion Gulley

Scorpedo (16) *** R. Halsey 23/11/14

Stay just right of arête at the top for maximum exposure.

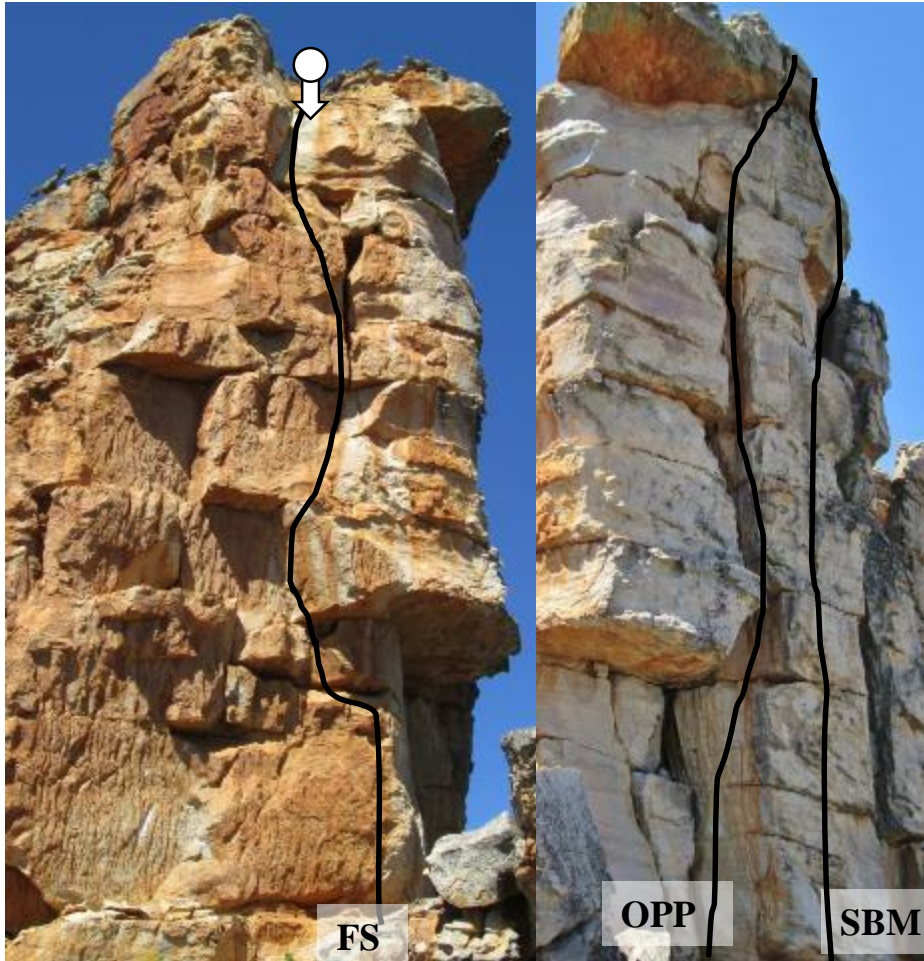
The Stinging Bay (21) ***** R. Halsey 23/11/14

Sustained, exciting finish.

Notes:

Shade until about midday

Abseil from tat anchor.



Blue Chip - left

Flying Saucer (18) ***** R. Halsey & M. Thilo 26/10/14

Will have you grinning; a bit of everything in this little gem.

One Piece Puzzle (18) *** R. Halsey & M. Thilo 26/10/14

Served on Blue Ming (17) ***

U. Pitsch & A. Hintringer 26/10/14

Notes:

Shade until about midday

Abseil point (~20m) above *Flying Saucer*. Please leave the mysterious crockery chip wedged where it is near the abseil point for other to enjoy.



The Ming Mystery.

How does a single remaining piece of a blue and white china saucer end up on top of a remote crag in the Koue Bokkeveld?

- Dust Devil?
- Aliens?
- Birds?
- All we know is that we will never know...



Blue Chip – right

Chocolate Factory (16) *** A. Hintringer & U. Pitsch
26/10/14

Nut Heads (18) **** U. Pitsch & A. Hintringer 26/10/14

Ming Dings (12) ** M. Thilo & R. Halsey 26/10/14

Notes:

Shade until about midday

Abseil point above *Flying Saucer*. Take care when stepping between the pillars.

